

Maryland Governor's Grants Office

Activities and Accomplishments: 2004

January 2005

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Maryland Governor's Grants Office

Description of Activities & Accomplishments: 2004

On February 1, 2004, Governor Robert Ehrlich officially created the Maryland Governor's Grants Office. What follows is a list of activities and accomplishments during this first year.

Website

A website was created www.gov.state.md.us/grants.html to consolidate information on new Federal grant opportunities, State grants, foundations, grant training, Federal procurement, and State agency grants personnel. The website is used by constituents, State legislators, Members of Congress, non-profit organizations, local governments, and State agency personnel. The website is continually updated to give all constituencies access to new Grants Office information on recent publications and upcoming training sessions.

State Agency Grants Team

Each Cabinet Secretary, along with many of the independent agency directors, has designated a primary point-of-contact for the Grants Office. The current list can be viewed at http://www.gov.state.md.us/grants/grants_contact.html. This team will meet in person six times during 2004 (last meeting will be on 12/17/04) to improve inter-agency coordination and to help manage the work of the Grants Office. Individual points-of-contact serve as subject experts and entry points for questions about all grant-related issues in their agency. Speakers at these meeting have included Governor Ehrlich, Governor's Chief of Staff, Executive Director for the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, Executive Director for Federal Funds Information for States, and the Website Coordinator for Grants.gov. The goals of the Grants Office and the points-of-contact were described in an article published in "The Daily Record."

"Federal Funds to Maryland State Agencies" Publication

The Grants Office compiled, printed, and distributed a first annual publication <www.gov.state.md.us/grants/pdfs/AR2004.pdf> describing each of the 472 Federal grants received by Maryland State agencies in Fiscal Year 2004 (totaling over \$5.5 billion). The publication includes analytical and comparative data serving as a benchmark to measure future funding levels. This publication serves as an educational tool on all Federal funding issues in Maryland and has been widely distributed to legislators, local governments, constituents, and through the public library system.

Grants Training (State Employees)

A key component of improving Maryland's performance in all aspects of grants (finding, winning, managing) involves increased training for State employees. A large introductory session (150 participants) was followed by eight smaller training sessions that focused on five specific topics:

- ❖ How to Apply for Federal Grants
- ❖ How to Write a Federal Grant Application Narrative
- ❖ How to Prepare a Federal Grant Budget
- ❖ Grants and Procurement: How They Work Together
- ❖ Federal Grants and the State Legislative Process

In most cases, trainers are State employees with subject-area expertise. In other cases, local and Federal grants officials have donated their time to assist in State employee training. To-date, over 300 State employees have participated in training sessions, many participating in multiple sessions. Curricula developed by the Grants Office for training sessions are posted on the website for access by all constituencies. This access also allows State agency points-of-contact to download training material for use in conducting training sessions within their agency.

Conference and Training (Local Government Employees)

Ongoing training and consulting services are offered to local government officials/staff on an individual basis. Technical assistance has been provided on an individual basis in 8 different local jurisdictions. The Grants Office also delivers presentations at State conferences that are targeted for local governments officials (e.g. Maryland Association of Counties and Maryland Humanities Council). The Grants Office hosted the first ever Local Government Grants Conference on January 4, 2005, with 450 people attending, and with every county in Maryland represented. The Grants Office assembled a steering committee of local government grants officials to collaboratively assist with all aspects of planning this conference and expects to expand this steering committee with new members to plan future activities with local grants officials.

Speaking Engagements

The Grants Office staff has spoken at a variety of events and conferences, including the following formal organizations:

- ❖ Maryland Congressional Delegation
- ❖ Maryland Association of Counties
- ❖ Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers
- ❖ Maryland Grants Coalition (County Education Grants Officials)
- ❖ All Hazards Forum Conference (Homeland Security)
- ❖ Maryland Humanities Council

In many smaller meetings (including individual meetings with 8 Congressional staff offices), Grants Office staff have explained the services provided by the Grants Office while also providing customized technical assistance for specific non-profit organizations and local governments. Many of these meetings have been facilitated through individual members of the Maryland General Assembly.

National Recognition (By the Federal Government)

The National Grants Partnership is an organization with a wide range of Federal agencies and national organizations as members. The Maryland Governor's Grants Office was asked to serve, and currently serves as the co-chair of the "Federal E-award Initiative" Committee (goal: assist the Federal government in providing timely information on Federal grants awarded to States in a single, easy to access e-location) as well as being co-chair of the "State Grants Liaison Committee."

National Recognition (By Other State Governments)

The Grants Office was one of five plenary presenters at the National Governor's Association, Center for Best Practices Annual Conference for Governor's Policy Directors. Individual consultations have been held with State officials in California, Delaware, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Louisiana. An article about the Maryland Grants Office appeared in "Front & Center: National Governor's Association Weekly Report to State Policymakers."

National Recognition (By Grants Professional Organizations)

Maryland State agency staff spoke at a National Grants Management Association (NGMA) conference on grants management issues. At the request of EJ Kraus, Inc. and the Maryland Department of Homeland Security, the Maryland Grants Office conducted a breakout session at the All Hazards Forum Conference & Exhibition to address the effective management practices of Homeland Security Grants awarded to states. Maryland served as a model in explaining the process of grants management at the state level, to a regional audience of Federal, state, and local government officials, and private sector vendors.

Consultation to Federal Government: Uniform Administrative Requirements

Due to Maryland's demonstrated expertise in Federal grants management regulations, the US Office of Management and Budget asked the Maryland Grants Office to join grants officials from Texas and Washington, D.C. in an advisory work session on revisions to OMB Circular A-102. This document establishes the rules for most aspects of Federal grants management. State governments consider some of this circular's language to be overly restrictive and

confusing. The Maryland Grants Office has been invited to provide additional guidance and feedback in 2005 when the restructuring of this regulation will begin.

Federal Procurement

While Federal grants have been a primary focus of the Grants Office, Federal procurement represents a larger amount of Federal dollars flowing back to Maryland (\$16.2 billion in Federal procurement vs. \$9.1 billion in grants, a total that includes grants to local governments, universities and non-profit organizations, not just State agencies). The Grants Office is preparing a report (currently in DRAFT form) providing information to assist individuals and businesses (both large and small) in participating in the Federal procurement process. The report will include data on the contractors and the counties currently most active in Federal procurement. The Grants Office is conducting meetings with the Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs, and the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED), to discuss ways to best use this information.

Problem Solving Within State Government Agencies

Grants Office staff met separately with staff in 19 different State agencies to individually address agency-specific grants issues and concerns. Results included improved internal processes for identifying, winning and managing grants. In other cases, roadblocks (or perceived roadblocks) that complicate or discourage State employees from seeking Federal grants were addressed with assistance from the Department of Budget and Management, Treasurer, Comptroller, and Department of Legislative Services.

Problem Solving With Maryland Treasurer: Grants Management

The Grants Office has organized meetings with staff from the Treasurer's Office, as well as with Federal grants officials, to improve the speed and accuracy with which the US Treasury allows the State of Maryland (through the Maryland Treasurer) to electronically "draw down" and distribute Federal grant funds associated with specific Federal grants.

Higher Education

In Maryland, a major recipient of Federal grants that come back to the State, but do not pass through State government agencies, are our colleges and universities. Johns Hopkins University (JHU) has the distinction of being the #1 recipient of Federal research funds (combination of grants and procurement) in the country, with the University of Maryland (UMD) also in the top 20. The Grants Office has met with grants officials in both institutions (also with Towson University and Morgan State University) to better coordinate strategies around Federal grants. The first State employee grant training session was held at UMD, and the first Local Government Grants session will be held at the JHU Applied Physics Laboratory.